



## **Rev. Alexander Pocetto, OSFS Writes History of DeSales**

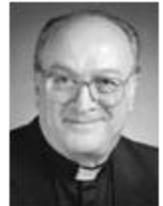
When DeSales president, Father Bernard O'Connor, OSFS, asked Father Alexander Pocetto, OSFS, senior vice president, to write the history of DeSales University, Fr. Pocetto knew that the work ahead of him would be exciting, yet, something that would need much attention.

Pocetto worked on the book in his spare time for more than two years. He would often bring his laptop into the archives of Trexler Library and take notes of the many records he sifted through to write the 240-page volume, *Drawing Out the Goodness, From Allentown College to DeSales University (1964-2001)*.

Using letters between the Bishop of Allentown, and the provincial, a history of the land purchase by Anne Ulans, copies of the student newspaper, *The Minstrel*, reports of the president, Board meeting minutes, and many other publications, Pocetto pieced together the first 40 years, explaining the struggles and growth DeSales experienced.

He says, "I thought that the history should be instructive. It is produced by an educational institution, therefore, what did we learn from those events? To me, it had a teaching function, not just merely something of history, because we can learn something from the stories of others. It helps us learn how our own story will turn out."

The book notes major events, such as the addition of the ACCESS program, the switch to a co-educational school, the cross-over from college to university, and ever-changing technology. Pocetto believes that the continual high-quality leadership that is found throughout the University has helped it advance to the place it is and will aid it in getting to where it wants to go.



Pocetto references Frs. J. Stuart Dooling and Daniel Gambet, OSFS, as the vanguard leaders of the University, whose passion and drive have continued through our current president, Board members, teachers and faculty, and with the aid of Bishop McShea and the Allentown Diocese, have all contributed to the success of DeSales. These leaders have been dedicated to insisting on the mission of a Catholic institution and the teachings of St. Francis de Sales to, "be who you are...and be that well," and apply it to the school.

The most challenging part for Fr. Pocetto was figuring out how to group the various events and where to separate them. Because he was writing the history of a still-functioning and growing institution, there were a number of things that couldn't be tied up in a chapter because they were also part of an important development down the road. "Overlap was inevitable, but you wanted to have some cohesiveness so that people could see the struggle and the growth that has taken place," says Pocetto.

Pocetto's favorite part of writing the book were the sections on *The Minstrel* because it demonstrated how important it was for the mission of the institution, and it reflected the struggles that DeSales experienced early on. "That is probably the most interesting section of the book," he says.



The title of the book was chosen before Fr. Pocetto even began writing and helped serve as an organizational tool for selecting the content. Pocetto feels that drawing out the goodness in our students is the basis of who we are, as a Catholic University. "If we lose sight of that, we lose sight of what we are. We aren't perfect, but we keep working on it and we keep improving."

Staying true to the core values and morals that the institution relied on when it first opened its doors has helped maintain its integrity to the present day. The culture has changed, but DeSales has not.

—Margaret McConnell (Beth McKinney '06 contributed to this article)